



Site 300: It's home of state's rarest wildflower

It seems an unusual location for what some call California's rarest wildflower: the steep slope of a canyon beneath a "drop tower" at Site 300, the Lab's high explosives testing area. But that's the home of *Amsinckia Grandiflora*, first discovered in the Antioch area in the 1880s.

Since 1938, Site 300 has been the only known abode of the small plant with the bright orange flowers. Several thousand were counted during a botanical survey in 1967, but the number has dropped with each passing survey.

Last month a survey team from the state, the University of California and the California Native Plant Society counted 23 of the rare wildflowers.

Botanists don't know why the species is facing extinction. Some suspect that water runoff from an uphill parking lot may be affecting the plant. Others believe the rare flower can't stand up to the aggressive competition from native grasses. Another possible reason is the disappearance from the area of rare bees which are needed to pollinate the plant, described by one botanist as having "an archaic and relatively ineffective reproductive system."

